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Despite the difficulties emerging in relationships between paraprofessionals and agency professionals--difficulties related to basic social cleavages (black-white, community-professional, and participation-authority)--the utilization of paraprofessionals will continue to increase because of community desire to influence the staffs of the agency or institution, to have an "inside" (community) voice in the school, for example. More community attention will now be directed toward how paraprofessionals are selected, trained, utilized, and how professionals are trained in working with them (learning from them as well as imparting knowledge to them). Moreover, there will be an increasing focus on the paraprofessional's role in producing reorganization and expansion of the human service system. Several related trends may coalesce with the paraprofessional movement to produce such change: the demand for accountability of the professions, the demand for community control and decentralization, the whole new involvement of the ghetto in regard to the human service agenda, and the great concern among increasing numbers of professionals regarding the nature of their profession. The paraprofessional by his very existence "inside the system" may increase the relevance of services and improve contact through his bridge or two-way communication role, functioning as a translator, expeditor, ombudsman, and advocate. (JS)

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# SOCIAL POLICY

#3 SOCIAL POLICY NOTES NOVEMBER, 1968

## THE NEW STRUGGLE FOR THE PARAPROFESSIONAL

(Between the Community and the Agencies)

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There has been a surprisingly rapid increase in the acceptance and utilization of paraprofessionals particularly by public agencies in the last six months.* This is now being matched by a significant increase in interest in paraprofessionals by private agencies.

A staff memorandum, September 11, 1968, of the Family Service Association of America reports that three-quarters of the United Funds have reordered or are reordering their funding priorities more fully to serve the needs of low income families. Over half of the projects described as illustrative of this nation-wide activity involve paraprofessionals. A local example was the October 9, 1968 meeting sponsored by Detroit's United Community Services involving 128 private social agencies in an active campaign to increase employment of paraprofessional personnel in private social agencies.

It is natural to ask why this new acceptance of the paraprofessionals is taking place at this time. There seem to be a variety of

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* There are a wide variety of indicators of this new development. The implementation of a career development system throughout the state government in California; CEO's new responsiveness to career development as indicated in the CAP grant application; the inter-agency New Careers sub-committee at the federal level; the Labor Department's funding of a coaches or buddy system in six cities; new expanded legislation in vocational rehabiliation, vocational education, higher education. etc.; the recently funded police aides program in Washington,D.C.; the State of Washington meeting of colleges engaged in New Careers programs; the major career development program of Headstart following their precedent-establishing supplementary training grants to over 150 colleges; the response of professional organizations such as NEA, NASW, unions such as the AFT, the State County and Municipal Workers, etc. See the "New Careers Newsletter," New Careers Development Center, School of Education, New York University

reasons but perhaps most important is the rising thrust of demands for local community control and decentralization by militant, community based forces. Establishment groups are beginning to see the paraprofessionals as a crucial link or bridge to these communities and to feel increasingly vulnerable unless they have involved representatives of the community on their own staffs. They experience a great need for two-way communication with the blacks and to some extent they want to incorporate elements of the community into their structures.

This use of paraprofessionals is rather different from their earlier role as an outreach to what was perceived as an essentially apathetic community: now it is an angry and militant community which must be approached. This not only accounts for their acceptance at a time in which new difficulties are emerging in their relationship to agency professionals. Several papers presented at the March, 1968 convention of the American Orthopsychiatric Association and a paper by Hallowitz* at the National Conference of Social Welfare reflect considerable questioning among professionals regarding the use of aides. This questioning is related to basic cleavages in the society which surround the use of paraprofessionals. The black-white cleavage, the community-professional cleavage, the participation-authority cleavage.

These cleavages reflect an increased concern with service issues in the society. Professional practice is in great crisis, is under great attack from the community as well as from professionals. There is a critique of the credential system and of the nature of services.

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* Emanuel Hallowitz, "Issues and Strategies in the Use of Nonprofessionals," presented at the N.A.S.W. Symposium of the National Conference of Social Welfare, San Francisco, May 25, 1968.

There is a demand for accountability, for new appropriate forms of training. No longer is there the notion that new careers means a new route to an old job, but rather present focus is on new rapid routes to new kinds of professional jobs because the old professional jobs and practice were appropriate. The paraprofessional is seen much more as an active agent of change in the system.

Arguments about the positive style of the paraprofessional, about whether he represents all the good things in the community or whether he is a model representative of the romanticized poor, are now going to the wayside. Whether the paraprofessional is illustrative of the idealized poor or not, as a group, as a force, he is presenting questions about the system, raising issues about the traditional methods of training and practice, arguing for more participation, voice and control, reflecting demands for community control

These cleavages are particularly troubling to those professionals who want to acquire an aide to perform tasks which the professional does not want to perform. The professional, in this context, simply wants an assistant or helper. Moreover, the New Careers model is interpreted by some professionals as a scheme whereby paraprofessionals go through various steps on a career ladder and ultimately become just like the present professionals in viewpoint. They do not understand the New Careers thrust for restructuring the entire practice of both paraprofessionals and professionals, directed toward producing a service that is more relevant and meaningful. They do not see the significance of the cross-socialization process whereby the professional will be affected by and learn from the paraprofessional as well as

vice-versa. Or, if they do see the latter, they see it as something smooth and simple in which each will teach the other in a cooperative, pleasant "team," with perhaps most of the teaching going one way -- from the professional to the paraprofessional. Unfortunately this is not the nature of most significant change. The dialectics of the change process usually entail much conflict, diversions, abrasiveness.

It is this change process which is beginning to be experienced by professionals working with paraprofessionals. They are discovering that the influx of large numbers of paraprofessionals is producing new demands, new questions, new pressures, new styles and new patterns of work as well as new positions and the restructuring of old service patterns. Of course, all the new questions and issues are not necessarily constructive; the paraprofessional is not simply coming into the systeam as the repository of all knowledge about the community, and providing recommendations required for the adaptation of the professional system; this might be nice, ideally, but it is hardly ever true in the nature of the change process. Rather, the paraprofessional is calling the shots as he sees them and frequently he sees them with quite distorted lenses related to his own limitations, the ambiguity of his role, and the special difficulties of the bureaucratic systems in which he is likely to be working.*

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* For discussion of the special difficulties of the nonprofessional as related to his training see "Strategies and Suggestions for Training Nonprofessionals" by F. Riessman, Community Mental Health Journal, June, 1967.

If there were not the increased need for the utilization of paraprofessionals vis a vis the community, these difficulties would undoubtedly slow significantly the utilization of the new workers.

THE COMMUNITY RESPONDS

It might be expected, also, that the community forces would respond to the danger of its leaders being coopted by opposition to the utilization of paraprofessionals. In fact, however, this has not been the case. Paraprofessionals are being strongly supported by activist community-based programs all over the country, such as Roxbury's (Boston) New School for Children, the Detroit Comprehensive Health Program, the NENA Health Project on the Lower East Side, the People's Health Center at Hunt's Point. This trend is reflected in the extensive use of aides by the three experimental decentralized school districts in New York City -- IS 201, Ocean Hill-Brownsville, and Two Bridges, as well as the similar program in Washington, D. C.

The community groups are probably supporting the expansion of paraprofessionals for a variety of reasons, including the need for jobs; but perhaps even more important is the desire to influence the staffs of the agency or institution, to have an "inside" (community ) voice in the school for example. As one community leader put it: "I'd rather have them working inside than cheering outside." Relevant also is the new interest in the paraprofessional by the Black Panthers, who are less an advocate of black capitalism and more concerned with the black poor. Support from CORE's National Chairman, Wilfred Ussery, Preston Wilcox, and groups like The Sons and Daughters of Watts, have crucial impact as well.

It can be anticipated that more community attention will now be directed toward how paraprofessionasl are selected, trained, utilized and how professionals are trained in working with them (learning from them as well as imparting knowledge to them). Moreoever, there will probably be an increasing focus on how professionals are utilized to improve and change the character of services in the community. Training programs will have to give more consideration to the role of paraprofessionals in system change. The old patronization regarding the use of paraprofessionals is now over. The paraprofessionals will increasingly demand a role, a participant voice in staff decisions inside the agencies, thus reflecting the new demands of community groups outside the agencies. They will be organized and related to militant community based movements and they will probably gave a new influence on the unions and their demands.*

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* See the paper by Gartner and Riessman, "Paraprofessionals, Their Organization, and the Unions," Social Policy No. 3, October, 1968. New Careers Development Center, New York University.

## THE PARAPROFESSIONAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE *

It is our thesis, as outlined above that for a variety of reasons it is quite likely that the paraprofessional may play an important role in producing change in the human service system -- that is, a basic reorganization of the human services as well as an expansion of them. This training can be heightened considerably by specific movement pressure and organization by the paraprofessionals and by community groups concerned about their utilization.

It is important also to note related trends which may coalesce with the paraprofessional movement: the demand for accountability of the professions, the demand for community control and decentralization, and the whole new involvement of the ghetto in regard to the service agenda.

Another related trend at the present time is the great concern among increasing numbers of professionals regarding the nature of their professions. Thus it is at a key point in time that the paraprofessional movement is entering the scene and this may make a considerable difference in its effect on social change.

It may be useful to observe a variety of criticisms that have developed concerning the human services and then to consider how the paraprofessional may play a role in meeting these criticisms. Rein among others, notes that a basic question may well be the lack of resources and consequently an insufficient amount of services. It is fairly clear that the paraprofessional adds to these resources by his very existence, and further adds pressure to the expansion of these resources as he increasingly brings more users into the system, demanding more and better services. The paraprofessional plays a basic role in overcoming under-utilization of services particularly by poor populations. He does this through his reaching and advocacy roles.

Another criticism related to the fact that the services have not been responsive to the specific needs of members of the population, again particularly the poor -- that is the service systems may not have made contact with these people, are not relevant. Again, the paraprofessional by his very existence "inside the system" may increase the relevance of services and improve contact through his bridge or two-way communication role, functioning as a translator, expeditor, ombudsman and advocate.

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* As large numbers of paraprofessionals are increasingly employed, there comes into play the possibility that they will be utilized to do jobs that were done before with a minimum of change in the system -- in essence they will be coopted to provide assistance to professionals who will do business as usual and career ladders will be ladders to old professional positions as they were traditionally defined. There is another danger which relates to the transitional problems of introducing large numbers of new personnel into the system. Here the possibility exists that there will be considerable chaos, disorganization, poor training of the paraprofessional and a retreat from significant system change.

A further major criticism of many of the service systems is that they are highly fragmented, discontinuous and overlapping. Again the paraprofessional can play a basic cementing role through his expeditor role and also through functioning in multi-service neighborhood centers to integrate services that are disconnected. By navigating clients through the system labyrinth he contributes to the de-fragmentation of these disconnected services. He can also be the worker in the team that provides a multi-service to a family and thus connect the family to the doctor, nurse, psychologist, etc. -- the model of the multi-service family worker developed in France, where each family has one worker or paraprofessional connecting it to the entire system.

Another deficiency in the service system relates to the fact that some of the fairly effective services such as family planning tehcniques, chest X rays, etc., simply do not reach enough people. Here again the paraprofessional can play a basic role through expanding the coverage of an authentic service.

Another basic difficulty in the service system is the de-professionalization of the professional -- the fact that he is involved in a great many activities that do not require advanced professional knowledge and training. Some of these tasks can be re-distributed to paraprofessionals, thus enabling the professional to become re-professionalized, to play such roles as classroom manager in the teaching profession.

A basic critique of the professionals is that they have developed a self-protection mystique concerning their expertise. The paraprofessional within the system may raise questions about these practices forcing them to the light of analysis. In a sense he disrupts the usual professional equilibrium and also brings into the professional agency the voice and questions of the community. In his cross-socialization and cross-training with the professions, the paraprofessional can also have an important impact on changing professional practice and indirectly the service system.

The paraprofessional may also provide the system with a variety of new functions hitherto not performed by professionals or anyone else. (See Hallowitz, "The Expanding Role of the Neighborhood Service Center").

To the extent that paraprofessionals are employed in large numbers, they produce a new climate and in the formation of their own groups release other forces of change.* If these groups connect with paraprofessional associations and unions, a new potential demand is created for change. To the extent that such groups ally with community groups, welfare rights groups, etc., this force becomes even stronger.

The demand for new training designs and for rapid upgrading also produces a pressure for change. The involvement of the paraprofessionals in new forms such as the Neighborhood Service Center which may be community controlled and the community school is also highly significant.

The paraprofessional can be the spokesman of the poor inside the system.

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* Alex Efthim, "We Care In Kansas, The Nonprofessional Revolt," The Nation August 5, 1968.